

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER. A play, with songs.

Written and performed by Tayo Aluko, with David C Williams, piano

Bolton Socialist Club. Friday July 5, 2019

Greetings, and welcome. We hear today of our prospective next Prime Minister vowing to make Britain the greatest place on Earth. Whatever the definition of great is, we know that we are not there at present, if we ever were. In the past, the so-called “greatness” was achieved by murderously conquering vast swathes of territory around the world, and by the enforced transportation and enslavement of millions of innocent souls around the world, whether from Africa or from the United Kingdom. This prospective PM has shown in the past a fondness and nostalgia for that part of this country’s history (including its white supremacist attitudes), so as an African living in Britain, I view the possibility of his ascension to office with much trepidation. Not that his opponent is any more attractive, given his track record as Health Secretary, forcing doctors and nurses to go out on strike for the first time in decades. As Foreign Secretary, he shows a bias toward the more reactionary and oppressive forces abroad: those that act as a catalyst for the incredible waves of asylum-seekers prepared to risk their lives to get to these parts. It isn’t easy to predict now how long the government will remain standing once the new PM is in place, and those on the Left who hope for a return of a Labour government will likely take inspiration from protest movements in other parts of the world that are currently showing remarkable results against tyrannical regimes. Hong Kong and Sudan are two examples, and while the outcomes of those are by no means certain at present, they are a reminder of the need for unity and solidarity, especially when the mainstream media and the elites manufacture stories aimed at discrediting the leader of the Party. As this play will hopefully show, we have been here before: the British Empire and the so-called Global Elite have used these methods for centuries, but ordinary people have always resisted, have always fought, and as the saying goes, “when we fight, we win.” Some of the most crucial weapons at our disposal are our knowledge of history, our belief in the concept of justice, and the rightness of our cause. Those who went before, whom we celebrate in this play remind us of that, and give us the strength to carry on. I hope you enjoy the show.

Tayo Aluko, Writer, Performer. Tayo was born in Nigeria, worked as an architect in Liverpool for many years. He has fronted orchestras as baritone soloist in concert halls, and has also performed lead roles in such operas and musicals as *Nabucco*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Anything Goes*. His first play, *CALL MR ROBESON* won numerous awards at festivals in the UK and Canada, as well as highly favourable reviews in the press – most notably *The Guardian* and BBC Radio 4. He has toured it around the UK, the USA, Canada, Jamaica and Nigeria, including New York’s Carnegie Hall in 2012. He delivers a lecture/concert called *PAUL ROBESON – THE GIANT, IN A NUTSHELL*, and another one titled *FROM BLACK AFRICA TO THE WHITE HOUSE*: a talk about Black Political Resistance, illustrated with spirituals. He researched, wrote and narrated to camera a piece on West African History before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which forms part of the permanent exhibit at Liverpool’s International Slavery Museum. His 15-minute play, *HALF MOON*, which also deals with ancient Africa, has been performed several times in the UK. He has developed a piece titled *WHAT HAPPENS?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes, for performance with live jazz accompaniment. He has been published in *The Guardian*, *The Morning Star*, *NERVE Magazine*, *Modern Ghana* and *Searchlight Magazine*. *JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER* premiered at the 2016 Edinburgh Fringe, and featured in the National Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, USA in August 2017, and at the Harare International Festival of the Arts, Zimbabwe in May 2018.

David C Williams, Piano. David studied at The Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. He has been employed as Director of Music of Holy Innocents Church, Fallowfield and as School Organist at Bury Church of England High School. He has also been Director Music at St. Paul’s Parish Church, Royton. David has got a teaching degree from Edge Hill University for a P.G.C.E in secondary music teaching.

Amanda Huxtable, Director. Amanda studied Recreational Arts in the Community Degree foundation course at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Communications and Cultural Studies at The University of Leeds. She served as Artistic Director of Yorkshire Women Theatre Company in Leeds from 2004-2009. She is part of a writer-and-director team with Marcia Layne and together they run Hidden Gems Productions, a theatre company committed to telling rarely told Black British Stories: Black British and Bold. Theatre Directing credits for Hidden Gems tours 2010 -2016 include: Bag Lady, Somebody's Son, Lost & Found and The Yellow Doctress - all by Marcia Layne. Freelance Director credits include: Bread and Roses by Ian Kershaw, (Oldham Coliseum). Wonder By Poppy Burton- Morgan (Edinburgh Fringe) Lady of Situations By Vanitas Arts, Shirley Harris and Seni Seneviratne,(Sheffield) She was Associate Director on Wakefield Mysteries,adapted by Nick Lane (Theatre Royal Wakefield) Directed HD100 Chol Theatre, (Lawrence Batley Theatre). Continent Chop Chop, by Virtual Migrants, (National Tour), Totally Over You, by Mark Ravenhill (Lawrence Batley Theatre), The Promise, by Chris Cooper (Belgrade Theatre Tour) Amanda was the Artistic Associate at Hull Truck Theatre, under the Arts Council's Changemakers Programme, where she directed Abigail's Party.

Emma Williams, Designer. Emma trained as a theatre designer at Wimbledon School of Art. Her recent design work includes "Abigail's Party" at Hull Truck Theatre, directed by Amanda Huxtable, with whose company Hidden Gems she also worked on "The Yellow Doctress", "HD100" for Chol at the Lawrence Batley theatre, both directed by Amanda Huxtable. "Iyalode of Eti", Utopia Theatre; "Molly's Marvellous Moustache", Fidget and "You Forgot the Mince" Imagine Theatre. Designs for the West Yorkshire Playhouse between 2003-2015 include: "Immune"; "Nine Lives"; "Refugee Boy"; "You The Player", co-production with Look Left Look Right; "Scuffer"; "Crap Dad"; "Two Tracks and Text Me"; "Runaway Diamonds"; "Broken Angel"; "Sunbeam Terrace"; "Huddersfield"; "The Dutiful Daughter"-co-production with Szechuan People's Theatre, Chengdu, China; "Coming Around Again"; "The Elves and The Shoemakers"; "Pinocchio"; "The Magic Paintbrush" and the original version of "The Yellow Doctress". Other designs include "One Among Millions", co-pro between RJC Youth Dance and Leeds University, 2016; "Brief Encounters @Bradford Interchange, a site-specific piece for Freedom Studios; "Strawberries in January" Traverse, Edinburgh;"The Shoe", Polka Theatre; "The Swing Left" Unlimited Theatre; "Small Objects of Desire"; Soho Poly Theatre. Opera credits include: "Siroe" Royal College of Music; "Partenope"; "Admeto"; "Alceste" all for Cambridge Handel Opera at New Hall Cambridge; "La Cenerentola"; "The Tales of Hoffman" and "Genevieve de Brabant", French Institute, London.

Esther Wilson, Dramaturg. Esther writes for stage, TV & radio. Her first R4 play 'Hiding Leonard Cohen' won a Mental Health in Media award. The Heroic Pursuits of Darleen Fyles is now in its tenth year on R4. Her stage play 'Soulskin' toured nationally with Red Ladder. She was lead writer on the award-winning 'Unprotected'. 'Ten Tiny Toes' was shortlisted for a TMA award. The sequel to the R3 version of Tony Teardrop was commissioned by R4. Esther's TV work includes: Jimmy McGovern's The Street (RTS award for best newcomer), Accused, Moving On, Call the Midwife and The White Princess. Her latest R4 play Me Myself I has just been nominated for the Tinniswood Prize.

Lighting Design: Mark Loudon; **Sound Design:** Noel Inyang and Tayo Aluko

Forthcoming Performances Include

Just An Ordinary Lawyer: July 12, 19: Buxton Fringe Festival; Sept 28: Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales

Call Mr. Robeson: July 11, 18: Buxton Fringe Festival; Aug 22: Multicultural Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, USA; **Sept 1:** Dramatic Hall, Peekskill, NY, USA; **Sept 13:** Heron Theatre, Beetham, Cumbria; **Sept 26, 27:** Theatr Clwyd, Mold, Wales; **Oct 26:** Littleport Library, Cambs.

Tayo Aluko & Friends

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